DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 332 202 CS 212 828

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| AUTHOR | Hollingsworth, Sandra; And Others |
| TITLE | Learning to Teach Literature in California: Challenging the Rules for Standardized Instruction. Research Series No. 200. |
| INSTITUTION | Michigan State Univ., East Lansing. Inst. for Research on Teaching. |
| SPONS AGENCY | Office of Educational Research and Improvement (ED), Washington, DC. |
| PUB DATE | Mar 91 |
| NOTE | 26p. |
| AVAILABLE FROM | Institute for Research on Teaching, College of Education, 252 Erickson Hall, Michigan State University, East Lansing, MI 48824-1034 ($3.00). |
| PUB TYPE | Guides - Non-Classroom Use (055) -- Reports - Research/Technical (143) |
| EDRS PRICE | MF01/PC02 Plus Postage. |
| DESCRIPTORS | *Beginning Teachers; Elementary Education; Higher Education; Longitudinal Studies; *Preservice Teacher Education; *Reading Instruction; Teacher Effectiveness; Teacher Influence; *Theory Practice Relationship; Urban Education; Whole Language Approach |
| IDENTIFIERS | California (San Francisco Peninsula) |

ABSTRACT

A longitudinal study, involving five beginning teachers, revolved around questions about how teachers' own emerging theories of literacy instruction are shaped by their interactions with other theories and perspectives and through their own work with students who are learning to read, write, and understand text in schools. Trained in the whole language or process approach to literature, the teachers in this study found it difficult to implement that approach with inner-city African-American, Latino, and Filipino students. The purpose of the study was both to inform teacher education policy and to provide teacher educators with ideas for better supporting beginning teachers. Triangulated data sources which documented the new teachers' learning consisted of audiotaped transcripts of monthly collaborative meetings and bimonthly videotaped classroom observations of literacy lessons as well as audiotaped open-ended interviews with the teachers. These teachers' experiences suggest at least three areas for reform in literacy education: reconsidering programmatic attention to beginning reading; integrating knowledge of literacy and school cultures; and redefining the boundaries of teacher education. All of the teachers found that sticking to the popular and policy-imposed "rules" for using original literature in any form was inappropriate for many children. The stories told by these teachers suggest that it may be beneficial to support beginning teachers internally as they are learning to teach literature. Without this support, the difficulty in learning to teach a literature-based, whole-language program designed to give all children access to literacy may lie with the institutional rules in schools and not with the new teachers. (Eighteen references are attached.) (MG)

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Research Series No. 200

# LEARNING TO TEACH LITERATURE IN CALIFORNIA: CHALLENGING THE RULES FOR STANDARDIZED INSTRUCTION

Sandra Hollingsworth
with Mary Dybdahl, Mary-Lynn Lidstone,
Leslie Minarik, Lisa Raffel, Karen Teel,
Jennifer Smallwood, and Anne Weldon

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Published by

The Institute for Research on Teaching
College of Education
Michigan State University
East Lansing, Michigan 48824-1034

March 1991

This work is sponsored in part by the Institute for Research on Teaching, College of Education, Michigan State University. The Institute for Research on Teaching is funded from a variety of federal, state, and private sources including the United States Department of Education and Michigan State University. The opinions expressed in this publication do not necessarily reflect the position, policy, or endorsement of the funding agencies.

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Abstract

This paper tells the individual and collective stories of five beginning elementary teachers in the San Francisco Bay Area as they learn to integrate the theoretical "ideals" of a literature-based, whole-language literacy program with the competing pragmatic, popular, and political perspectives for teaching literacy in elementary schools. Having learned and practiced whole-language or process approaches to literature in their teacher education programs at the University of California, Berkeley, these teachers discovered difficulties in actually implementing the approach to help inner-city African-American, Latino, and Filipino students respond independently to text. The new teachers continued to seek education and support through monthly conversations with each other and university researchers.

Triangulated data sources which documented their learning consisted of (a) audiotaped transcripts of the monthly collaborative meetings and (b) bimonthly videotaped classroom observations and audio-taped open-ended interviews of literacy lessons. Themes emerging through the constant comparative analysis reveal the school-based obstacles teachers needed to overcome in order to teach what they knew and believed about literacy. The challenges that teacher education must face in order to adequately prepare new teachers are outlined here. A companion paper (R.S. 201) documents the means through which two of these teachers learned to surmount the obstacles.

# LEARNING TO TEACH LITERATURE IN CALIFORNIA: CHALLENGING THE "RULES" FOR STANDARDIZED INSTRUCTION

Sandra Hollingsworth with Mary Dybdahl, Mary-Lynn Lidstone, Leslie Minarik, Lisa Raffel, Karen Teel, Jennifer Smallwood, and Anne Weldon[1]

For the past four years I have been talking with 28 beginning teachers as they learn to teach reading. This longitudinal study began when the teachers were enrolled in graduate-level teacher education programs at the University of California, Berkeley, and is continuing into their first years of teaching. My interest in this work revolves around questions about how teachers' own emerging theories of literacy instruction are shaped by their interactions with other theories and perspectives--particularly those represented by their teacher education program instructors, teaching colleagues, administrative policymakers--and through their own work with students who are learning to read, write, and understand text in schools. The purpose of this investigatory line is both to inform teacher education policy and to provide teacher educators with ideas for better supporting beginning teachers.

As a consequence of my interests, I've spent hundreds of hours in classrooms around the San Francisco Bay Area from 1986 through 1990.[2] I sat in on the teachers' literacy course work, talked with their instructors and supervisors, collected their journal notations, observed their teaching, and interviewed them twice a month. A small group of those beginning teachers met

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[1]Sandra Hollingsworth, an assistant professor of teacher education at Michigan State University, is a senior researcher in the Institute for Research on Teaching, working on the Students' Response to Literature Instruction Project. The other authors are teachers in California: Mary Dybdahl is a third/fourth-grade teacher at Edna Widenmann Elementary, Vallejo; Mary-Lynn Lidstone is a graduate student at the University of California, Berkeley and a classroom assistant; Leslie Minarik is a second-grade teacher at El Portal Elementary, San Pablo; Lisa Raffel is a fourth-grade teacher at Loma Vista elementary, Vallejo; Karen Teel is a graduate student at the University of California, Berkeley and a seventh-grade teacher at Portala Middle School, Richmond; Jennifer Smallwood is an Independent Educator; and Anne Weldon is a sixth-grade teacher at Sequoia Middle School, Pleasant Hill.

[2]I am using the first person for clarity in this article. Actually, the studies were conducted by a team of research assistants including Marcia Cantrell, Ann Henderson, Mary-Lynn Lidstone, Karen Teel, and Lisa Anderson Thomas--and these teachers: Anthony Cody, Mary Dybdahl, Leslie Minarik, Lisa Raffel, Jennifer Smallwood, and Anne Weldon.

with me monthly to discuss and critique what they are coming to understand about literacy instruction. Having taped and transcribed our conversations, I coded and summarized these multilayered data sources to determine common themes, patterns, and relationships in learning to teach (after Erickson, 1986; and Glaser & Strauss, 1967). In other reports, I've suggested how teachers' beliefs and experiences influence what they learn in course work, how classroom management and social interactions garner their attention before they shift focus to the content of literacy, and how--after the context, content, and instructional issues are settled--they can then devote the majority of their attention to students' learning. Other members of the group and I have also written about the importance of collaborative discussion, modeling, and coaching as teachers encounter new instructional situations (see Hollingsworth, 1989a, 1989b, 1990b; Lidstone, 1990; and Teel & Minarik, 1990).

I want to use this opportunity to tell individual and collective stories about the difficulty of learning to integrate the theoretical "ideals" of a literature-based, whole-language literacy program with the competing pragmatic, popular, and political perspectives for teaching literacy in elementary schools. The stories are based on five teachers who were continuing members of our monthly collaborative group. I will outline the school-based perspectives--expressed as rules for standardizing instruction--which these teachers had to overcome in order to teach what they knew and believed about literacy. I hope, in doing so, to challenge current notions about learning to teach literature, particularly emphasizing the powerful role of school rules on the instructional translation of their learning. I want to build an awareness in the teacher education community for integrating new theories with standard school policies--to support new teachers better as they attempt to provide appropriate instruction for their students.

## Background: The California Literature Initiative

At the time I began teaching at the University of California, Berkeley, in 1986, many San Francisco Bay Area schools (where these teachers were then student teaching) were shifting from basals to literature as the material and philosophic bases of their literacy programs. "Literature" usually took the form of trade books but also meant patterned language stories by well-known

authors--especially in the primary grades. The textual changes coincided with and roughly echoed those in the new California English Language Arts Framework (California State Department of Education, 1987). By the beginning of the 1989-90 school year, the popular movement to literature had spread throughout the Bay Area, and all of the teachers in our monthly collaborative group taught in such schools.

The instructional shift was theoretically supported both by the whole-language movement's endorsement of meaningful text (Harste, 1990) and the process approach of the Bay Area Writing Project (Gray, 1988). Our work further suggested that the popularity of the literature-based approach was based on teachers' personal theories of literacy. As adults, they enjoyed reading and discussing good literature, and they assumed that children would be equally motivated to do so.

As a reading instructor for these teachers during their years as students at the university, I supported the meaning-based theories of acquiring literacy behind the literature and whole-language movements. As a former secondary and elementary classroom teacher and reading specialist myself, I also knew that these beginning teachers would also need access to a broad range of theoretical assumptions about reading--and their instructional implications. I wanted my preservice teachers to have experience with various models of reading and emergent literacy--to become knowledgeable about developmental, linguistic, and social theories of learning to read as well as the semantic or meaning-based theories. I also wanted them to become familiar with varying instructional models, such as flexible groups, lesson structures, and assessment techniques. Such a breadth of strategies, it seemed to me, was supported theoretically by the whole-language model. And, given the wide range of students these teachers would teach in California schools, a broad or eclectic interpretation of "whole-language" also seemed to make good sense. Three teachers in our group taught in ethnically diverse inner-city or working class neighborhood schools.

Leslie Minarik, a second-grade teacher beginning her third year of teaching, represented such a perspective when she talked to Karen Teel, a research assistant, about how she would structure a whole-language lesson:

> I don't know how it is "officially" defined, but my idea of whole-language is that you basically start with an interesting story or concept. Usually it's a story or a poem or something. Then you set up the story or poem, which means going over vocabulary or something connected with it, then I model reading it, then they read it, then we make variations on it [by composing our own stories]. Or we do some comprehension checks, and we discuss the story. Then, within the context of the story, we talk about phonics, or spelling words, or punctuation. Then we do some kind of a writing project connected with it. So that the writing stems from the reading. (LM: 10/25: 7)

Leslie also integrated familiar songs, sign language, drama, and poetry into the reading and writing experiences. She created thematic units through various textual sources and subject areas. She had students write about personal experiences in journals with partners each morning (which also freed some of her time for administrative duties). There was time for listening to taped books, participating in readers' theater, conducting group research projects, and composing class books.

The other teachers in our group shared similar perspectives. In other words, both their stated positions and actual practices suggested that the teachers had little difficulty accepting the philosophy embedded in the whole-language theory--or the broad principles of practice. The difficulty in learning to teach literature occurred as they attempted to translate the philosophy into the real world of practice. There they found both specific interpretations of whole-language, which competed with what they learned as student teachers, and pragmatic constraints against implementation. These competing perspectives often took the form of popular rules and institutional policies for teaching literature which pressured teachers to standardize instruction by operating within limited boundaries. In the next sections, we'll look at three instructional domains--grouping, book distribution, and skill instruction--with respect to the popular and policy-enforced rules that were common to the teachers' school sites. We'll then describe how the teachers were able to make decisions about the appropriateness of the prevailing standards, synthesize these "rules" with their own beliefs, and instruct children in reading and writing through literature.

## Student Grouping Rules

### Popular Support for Grouping Rules

At the time our group members were student teaching, literature instruction in the Bay Area was commonly practiced as a whole-class activity. When questioned about this practice, their cooperating teachers explained that whole-class instruction was seen as more humanistic than individual or ability-grouped instruction; even flexible grouping was suspect. Alternative practices seemed to connote a conservative "deficit" model of poor reading. If the whole class read and discussed the same book, children not yet proficient in reading and writing would less likely be identified, labeled, or humiliated. Further, exposing all readers to the same textual materials was thought to be a way to provide equal opportunities and encourage shared experience and skills while learning to read. Lisa Raffel, a fourth-grade teacher, remembered her experiences with whole-class literature instruction as a student teacher:

> Here in Berkeley, where there is such a commitment not to group according to ability because it is seen as racist, [I found that all the sixth-grade] kids got something out of the book. They made it through Roll of Thunder, Hear My Cry, which is a hard book, but great for discussion. Even the kids who weren't reading it got into the discussion. And being with this teacher who was so committed to not grouping by ability because it hurts kids, [I ended the program] feeling like, "Gosh, this really makes sense; it's really right." (10/19: 17)

During most of their classroom language interactions in their first two years of teaching, Lisa and the other teachers worked in a whole-class format. Leslie cited both philosophical and organizational reasons for doing so: "I don't know how to teach four kids [in a separate group] and keep the rest of the class happy" (LM: 10/25: 5).

### Policy Support for Grouping Rules

After the literature approach had been endorsed by the 1987 State of California Language Arts Framework, basal publishers began to compete for classroom space with the trade books Lisa's cooperating teacher had been using by promoting the fact that their books now contained selections from good literature. When schools endorsed such materials, they brought back into classrooms the grade-level expectations accompanying the basals, that is, second-grade children should read second-grade books. That policy, along with the earlier practice of whole-class

literature instruction and a fear of small-group labeling, led teachers to continue the large-group rules for instruction with the new materials.

Further Discussion of Grouping Rules

Whole-class instruction did seem to provide a good opportunity for teachers to manage the class more effectively by keeping all students on the same task, allow for good lesson pacing, encourage rich discussions about text, and take less lesson preparation time. The problems with whole-class instruction occurred with the students who had difficulty reading and writing. I noticed that they rarely contributed to class discussion or asked questions in the large group. The teachers in our group worried about those students but were told by the more experienced teachers to stick with the whole-class rule. The less competent students would comprehend the text by listening to others' discussions, which would in turn motivate them to read on their own.

Closely watching children's responses led Jennifer Smallwood, a second-grade teacher, to question a belief that a whole-class, single-text program would teach children to read, "if we just stuck with it long enough" (CM: 4/12:5). The rules seemed politically and socially appropriate, yet Jennifer and the other teachers could not accept the reality that so many students across the many cultures and communities represented in Bay Area classrooms had varying degrees of success in becoming literate. The students' lack of success became almost intolerable when the shift was made from trade literature to graded literature basals. Teachers could graphically see failure and frustration, even when the text was supposed to be written at grade level. The whole-class approach did not conceal many students' poor self-images due to their consistent failure in learning to read, or write, or to participate fully in cooperative tasks.

Jennifer did not trust small-group instruction either, having grown up an African-American female assigned to low-track reading groups. Instead, she encouraged a flexible form of self-selected grouping which seemed to promote cooperation and shared learning but looked much less orderly than either small-group or whole-class instruction. Though her students were more engaged with the text than they were with whole-class instruction, Jennifer had trouble gaining support for her position.

## Book Distribution Rules

### Popular Support for Book Distribution Rules

Before the arrival of the literature-based basal, books to be read by a class were chosen by two main criteria: the availability of sufficient numbers of texts other teachers were not using and school standards that stated which books were to be used in certain grades. Criteria such as differences in students' prior knowledge or teachers' intent did not surface in our transcripts as acceptable guidelines for selection. One of the reasons that a teacher might select a book was pragmatic: Approximately 30 copies of each book were now needed for whole class use. Usually the school owned only enough copies of a book for one class to read it at a time. Other criteria for book distribution rules were more substantive. For example, teachers delineated "core" reading lists for each grade level. The books then helped organize cross-disciplinary studies. Mary Dybdahl, a third/fourth-grade teacher, told us that the lists were intended to prevent possible situations in which third-grade students would read Charlotte's Web, answer vocabulary questions as part of the reading lesson, "cut out pigs and spiders" as part of their art lesson, study insects as part of their science lessons, and then repeat the same activities in fourth grade.

"I was almost attacked at lunchtime when the fifth-grade teachers found out I was having the fourth-grade class read Sarah, Plain and Tall. "Mary told our group. When Mary questioned the rationale behind the objection, she was told by a veteran teacher: "The basic instructional strategy for Sarah, Plain and Tall was prediction, because it contained too much symbolism for fifth-graders to comprehend [an explanation paraphrased from a commercial publisher's activity packet]. If the class has already read the book, there goes our prediction lesson!" (CM: 11/2:10).

There was some speculation among the teachers in our group that repetition of literature from grade to grade might also interfere with the joy of discovering a book for the first time. It might have further been connected to the notion that children attend better to new material. The problems of off-task behavior could increase if books were re-read, learning might decrease and teachers might not be able to maintain effective class control.

Policy Support for Book Distribution Rules

The book distribution problem changed character in the 1989-90 school year when school districts began to adopt the new basals which met the California Language Arts Framework guidelines:

> So we basically were on our own [with trade books]. We were kind of shaky. We didn't get a lot of support for doing this; we didn't get materials. It was kind of helter-skelter--share what you can. Then [our district] adopted this new series. They came up with this basal, which was typical, except that it happens to have some really nice stories in it--and they are literature, [like] Frog and Toad. [Stories by] authors you've all heard of. (Leslie, CM: 2/1: 13)

The new purchases provided literature that the teachers liked and solved some of the distribution problem as it raised others:

> When we were required to use the grade-level books, the other teacher [who taught the same grade] and I got together and were panic-stricken because we knew some of our kids couldn't read them. And then we asked for material [from the previous grade] so we could start our kids there, but they refused to do that. . . . So then we were faced with sneaking around to get copies of the material and photocopying parts of it. (Leslie, CM: 2/1: 14)

The result of such policies was that some children were frustrated with the texts and others were bored. Sometimes a piece of literature would fit perfectly into a thematic plan, but the teacher was barred from using it because it was to be saved for a later grade level. And Mary found that even when books were available and fit her plan, they sometimes did not work for her own students:

> I loved Little House on the Hill and thought my kids would too. But they hated it. I asked them why, and these kids [most of whom live] in poverty, didn't want to read about pioneers. They saw [pioneers] as poor people! They wanted to read stories about success in modern times. (CM: 11/2: 11)

However, a benefit to the standard distribution system for books which Mary and the others acknowledged was that all children would at least have access to good literature in school, something often reserved for "gifted" children with previous basal distribution rules.

## Skill Instruction Rules

### Popular Support for Skill Instruction Rules

The humanistically motivated fear of differential practices which might be seen as "deficit" instruction not only underpinned school rules for grouping and book distribution. Such a perspective also seemed to motivate schools to use the shift to literature and whole-language as an opportunity to ban skill or strategy instruction. Attention to any features of literacy which might have been philosophically associated with isolated "subskills" at the letter-sound level--such as phonemic awareness or decoding--was forbidden. Isolated vocabulary work was exempt from the standard restriction, perhaps because it was seen as essential for understanding the literature. Antiskill rules were enforced by discouraging not only small-group instruction but also workbook practice. Three teachers at separate schools were explicitly told by their principals that their schools "did not endorse the use of workbooks for instruction."

The rationale for this edict was that workbooks largely consisted of disconnected skill practice (and thus was busy work), did not contain meaningful reading, and limited the teachers' own freedom to make classroom decisions about literacy instruction. Few would disagree with that description. I also agreed with it, because the type of isolated practice in most workbooks does not seem to transfer to actual text. I had recommended a more integrated approach which involved analysis and instruction of reading strategies to facilitate students' reading and writing of actual text. But even integrated attention to subcomponents of literacy skills, unless they were thought to help access "meaning" (e. g., prediction practice and vocabulary work), seemed to be unacceptable.

Though subskill instruction and workbooks were ruled out, the need for some form of seat work and independent practice still existed. In 1986 and 1987 teachers met that need, without the help of publishers' manuals, by developing "reading packets" or "contracts." As originally intended, contract or packet materials to accompany trade books were thought to be conceptual advances over the workbook because they would address individual students' literacy needs to access meaning from text. The specially prepared contracts could build on students' prior

knowledge and encourage them to take part in identifying their particular needs for vocabulary work, answering comprehension questions, doing some creative writing, and/or practicing other meaning-based literacy functions.

What we actually found when we looked across transcripts of bimonthly classroom observations and interviews and monthly group discussions was a mismatch between policy, theory, and practice. Because of the practical demands of preparing such packets, teachers shared materials with other teachers then distributed the same packet to the full class. We saw many of the same packets xeroxed, stapled, and used like workbooks across classrooms and schools. During 1987 we noticed that trade books available in multiple copies for classroom use were checked out of school storerooms with the duplicated packet used to accompany it.

In 1988 and 1989, commercial packets became available to supplement the trade books. They contained questions for teachers to ask, independent skill work, writing practice, and research assignments. Both the teacher-made packets and the commercial versions were reproduced for classroom use in standardized forms. We rarely saw teacher-designed literature supplements for particular classes. The few I did notice were generally standardized across classrooms through the distribution system. Mary, for example, told us that she had written a literature packet to accompany a book she was using in her assigned school as a preservice teacher. She had developed the packet for that particular class to meet their needs and interests. Two years later, she was surprised to see it surface in her new school on the other side of the Bay where it became standard material accompanying the book distribution. Like most of the other teacher-produced materials we saw, it was used generically--and without mentioning the teacher/author's name nor the student characteristics for which the materials were created.

Despite these theoretical and political clarifications of the differences between packets and workbooks, I noticed little actual difference between the structure and content of the packets used for literature seat work and the workbooks which were previously used for basal seat work. The primary difference was that I never saw contracts which contained practice at the letter/sound level of language. I also noticed that students' misconceptions while completing written work were

similar whether they practiced either workbook or packet activities. For example, I found that students using packets still frequently copied only the first definition from the dictionary to complete their vocabulary work then transferred the words incorrectly to their writing. Similar misconceptions spread across classrooms with the packet distribution system.

Policy Support for Skill Instruction Rules

By the beginning of the 1989-90 school year, the popular rule against skill instruction was further enforced with the adoption of the literature-based basals. The most widely sold series were marketed by emphasizing that they contained "original" pieces of classic and current literature. The new series also met the other California Language Arts Framework requirements for attending to meaning in literacy instruction and not to subskill processes such as phonemic analyses found in the earlier basals and also in the easy-to-read versions of literature in some of the competing basals. The competing versions contained most of the same story line as the original pieces but with simplified semantic and syntactic text loads intended to assist beginning readers.

All but one of our teachers--Anne Weldon--taught in districts which adopted the most popular new series. Though the basal was back in a new form, rules against accompanying workbooks continued. Administrators elected to purchase the optional skills practice booklets which accompanied the new basal series only as reference for the teachers and not for use by the students.

Policy Support Against Skill Instruction Rules

The rule against skill practice in workbook form was countered by school testing policies. It became very clear in our work together that the evaluation policies of a program or school--even more than text purchases--influenced what teachers felt they must emphasize instructionally, even if the process violated their own personal theories or beliefs. Changes in Mary's 1989-90 grade-level assignment help to illustrate this point. As a third/fourth-grade teacher, Mary was now required to administer the CAS/ITAS test (a combination of the school-oriented California Assessment System, and the Individual Tests of Academic Skills). With the

test as an evaluative backdrop, Mary suddenly became concerned with differences in skills children used as they read and wrote and those which were specifically tested:

> This year, I was reassigned to third grade and I have to give the tests. I've been trying to figure out what I have to test. I really don't see that much difference in the ability levels of my students from my last year. Actually, this year almost everyone is at least at first-grade reading level! I don't know what else to do to get them ready for the third-grade skills tests except to have them practice in some of the skills sheets. (CM: 9/20: 1)

The philosophic rule against skill instruction limited the resources and the opportunities for discussion about alternative ways for reconciling differences between the no-skills instructional perspective and the skills-based tests. The value her district placed on the test scores thus convinced her to use some of the contraband "workbook-type" materials for insurance, even though she questioned their value:

> We were told that the student materials would not be available because the district wanted to move away from the workbook approach to reading. The administration finally gave in when the teachers complained. I was given one set of all the student materials plus an extra box of thermofaxes. From my perspective the supplementary material looks very similar to the contracts I used last year with my literature books. My nonreaders didn't get much from the contracts and I'm not convinced these worksheets will help them either. (Hollingsworth & Dybdahl, 1989, p. 8)

Teachers who felt little school or peer pressure to have their children test well felt they had more freedom of choice in materials and strategies. For example, as a second-grade teacher, Leslie was required to administer a less skills-focused test. School officials suggested that the tests were so important that they even put off administering it until late in the spring to provide sufficient practice time. However, Leslie found the reality of the school's use of the tests to differ from the emphasis they put on practicing for the CAP (California Assessment Profile). She also questioned the validity of the test itself:

> We didn't get them back until this fall, and then they were just filed away without any discussion. . . . All I've heard is that reading scores are down and math scores are up. So it can't be too serious a concern. . . . Besides, it seems that children do well on the test when they have a good sight word vocabulary which comes from reading a lot. It doesn't seem to be valid for those kids who don't read much because their reading is difficult for them. (LM: 3/9: 4)

Leslie didn't feel it was necessary, therefore, to supplement her regular contextually based skill instruction with workbooks in order to ensure test-compatible reading practice. She felt her eclectic instruction of literature to be both consistent with the whole-language, literature-based program's philosophy, and--until her third year when she was given 12 nonreaders--sufficient for her second-grade students.

## Evaluating and Overcoming Standard Rules for Literature Instruction: Do They Work for Kids?

The beginning teachers in the monthly conversation group seemed to employ a critical question to evaluate the popularized and policy guidelines for whole-language instruction: Do the standard rules work for the students in my current classroom? Whether a teacher tended to endorse or modify the rules on grouping, skill instruction, and book distribution depended on how well the rules facilitated literacy development. Mary, for example, questioned the rule for using contracts or packets as part of literature instruction.

> I'm questioning the whole issue of reading contracts that are associated with literature-based reading programs. I talked to Sam [Hollingsworth] about this at length. I've actually been grappling with this issue since I started student teaching two years ago. I don't know what the relationship is between the kinds of reading contracts I see--the traditional reading contracts that I've seen in schools, in place, ones that I've even made--and reading itself. I don't know what skills are being taught by having the kids do these. That was the issue that Lisa and I were talking about when I characterized it as having the kids "bide their time." Is it something that they need to do to keep busy, to prove that they've read, because it helps them read better, to improve their vocabulary? (MD: 3/14: 7)

These discussions on the standard rules in literacy instruction eventually led Mary to drop the use of packets and design other practice materials which apparently elicited wider responses to literature in her students. (See Dybdahl, 1990, and Hollingsworth, 1990a, for examples of the teachers' efforts to create conversational structures to free children's responses to text.) One of Mary's most successful activities is to have her current third/fourth-grade class re-read their books in self-selected partnerships, discuss the story with each other using the pictures as a guide, and finally write about the story.

Other examples of teachers' evaluation and change of instructional "rules" occurred both in the use of whole-class instruction and book distribution. Teachers who saw their students' literacy abilities improve using whole-class instruction with trade books tended to retain the whole-class method when the shift was made to literature-based basals. For those teachers who did not find whole-class success in trade books, the literature-based basals seemed to amplify those problems. Instead of using literature of varying difficulties which the whole class read and discussed as a group, the assigned grade-level texts often proved to be either too difficult or not challenging enough for many of their students. Problems could no longer be assumed to lie with text difficulty variations. The shift in reading materials made those teachers clarify and/or reconsider their personal beliefs and theories about appropriate whole-language instruction. They began, instead, to turn their attention away from rules for recommended materials and instructional practices and look at children's reading more closely.

Some teachers found that they had to make changes not only in book-distribution rules but in grouping- and skill-instruction rules as well--in order to help students become literate and to participate fully in the system. In the middle of Leslie's third year, she asked a group of 12 second graders who rarely participated in the whole-class instruction to meet together with an aide four days a week. The usual instruction she provided her whole class was not reaching these nonreaders. For about 20 minutes each day, they read linguistically simplified text--in which they were consistently successful. She talked about the changes she was noting:

> In general I feel really happy about [working specifically with the nonreaders]. I haven't tested them, I've listened. I haven't given them any formal test, and I probably won't do that. What I've used for assessment is that I've watched their attitude. They tend to be kids who wouldn't interact with print, and were pretty depressed and exhibited behavior problems.
>
> Now these kids engage in print a lot more during [whole-class] silent reading time. They'll go up and try to find books. I've listened to them read and it's a lot better. (CM: 21: 15-16)

Lisa Raffel came to realize that while many of her students enjoyed the whole-class literature discussion format, many of them never learned to read following that grouping rule. As the reading instructor for Lisa and the other teachers, I had recommended flexible grouping.

However, the teachers didn't recall learning much about grouping issues from me. Their work in schools, where the whole-class rule was in place, took precedence over my suggestions. Lisa remembered grouping from her own school experiences, however, and used the return to literature-based basals materials as an opportunity to use more flexible small groups and variously graded versions of the same literature theme. She wanted her students to be able to read what they were discussing themselves. As she talked to our group about her fourth/fifth-grade combination class, she remembered a similar problem in her student teaching classroom.

Mary: What do you mean [your] kids aren't reading?

Lisa: It's similar to my sixth-grade [student teaching class], I had kids that could not read the book. I don't mean like struggled. I mean, they could not.

I spent the first two years never using the basal. I did literature books, and I had kids who could read reading to less able kids, but I was not willing to group by ability. And I don't know what. . . . I guess last year I started to feel uncomfortable about it because I didn't see the low kids' reading skills improve, because they weren't reading! All year!

So, then, when the resource teacher, Jan, and I were planning to work together, we talked about how we were going to group. And at the same time, remember, the whole district is against it--they're absolutely committed to not grouping. Everyone in the grade has to read an "at grade level" book.

Jennifer: Like all of a sudden [with this change to the new graded basal series] they're all going to be at grade level!

Lisa: Right! All of a sudden. And the only good thing was that for the first year I was going to get to use a fourth-grade instead of fifth-grade book, because all my students weren't ready for the fifth-grade materials yet.

Mary-Lynn (research assistant): Can you get away with that?

Lisa: Well, my principal doesn't really know what I'm doing yet, but she respects me so. . . . So, at first we were going to do the fourth-grade book by reading out loud, having them read to each other, and then finally I felt--I don't know where it came from, whether it was [talking to you all] or it was me--I thought, "This isn't OK! They have to be reading! That's how we learn how to read!"

I just thought, I can't do it. I called Jan up that night and said I had to talk to her in the morning. So I got to school the next day and I said, "Jan, I want to group by ability and I want to put them in a lower text." And she said, "Fine."

So we got first-grade texts as well as third-grade and fourth. Paperbacks. We just took them from the book room. The kids who had been struggling in the fourth-grade text now read The Teeny Tiny Woman (a first-grade text). They all read the whole book, and they practiced on their own, and they'd take them home for homework. It was really true that they felt successful at that level.

Karen: You don't think they feel bad about being in that group?

Lisa: Oh, I don't think they feel bad at all. One thing we are going to do is rotate the books and the kids who read better are going to create their own pattern book out of that first-grade book.

These other kids [reading the first-grade book] also wrote a pattern book--well, at least a page. And they read them to the kindergartners and they behaved beautifully. For once they were the top! They got to shine.

Anne (sixth-grade teacher): How many kids did you have in the first-grade book?

Lisa: Ten.

Because of such realizations, Lisa and the others eventually began to use a variety of small groups--even in upper grade classes where students had fewer overt literacy problems. Anne's sixth-grade suburban students, for example, resisted when she first switched from whole class to include cooperative groups as formats for literature discussions. After both she and they adjusted, Anne felt the smaller groups improved their comprehension.

## The Challenge for Preservice Teacher Education

These teachers' experiences suggest at least three areas for reform in literacy education: reconsidering programmatic attention to beginning reading, integrating knowledge of literacy and school cultures, and redefining the boundaries of teacher education. Each is discussed in turn.

### Reconsidering Programmatic Attention to Beginning Reading

All of the teachers hired into inner-city and working-class schools had to teach beginning reading, no matter what their grade-level assignment. None of them felt the attention to beginning reading had been adequate in either their preservice teacher education or staff development programs. I also found that the mismatch between student teaching and beginning teaching classroom assignments contributed to this problem. Since most children in student teaching classrooms could read, the new teachers had little incentive to pay attention to that content when I presented it. Further, because of the cultures of their practice sites, which endorsed "whole-language/whole-word/whole-class" approaches to literacy for beginners, my attempts to have new teachers consider alternatives were silenced. Though the whole-language movement does provide one valuable perspective to beginning reading, the philosophically based "rules" to ignore other linguistically based approaches to literacy handicapped these teachers and their children.

Integrating Knowledge of Literacy and School Cultures

Preparing teachers in this study to have a broad knowledge of literacy theory and instruction was not sufficient for them to successfully teach children to become literate. They also needed to have an understanding of the standardizing influence of school and legislative rules they are likely to find in their beginning classrooms--and to integrate those two domains of knowledge through a critical perspective; that is, instead of simply having students learn theories and practices of literacy and take a separate course on the social foundations of education, they might also be asked to filter subject-specific knowledge through an understanding of the school culture and school-based challenges they'll face as they implement those practices.

Redefining the Boundaries of Teacher Education

As a field, we've long known that the school cultures in which beginning teachers work heavily influence their learning (Lortie, 1975; Zeichner & Tabachnick, 1981). We've just begun to understand that teachers' beliefs about teaching and learning influence their work as well. We know that success with children using literacy approaches contrary to those beliefs and cultures can help change teachers (Guskey, 1986; Hollingsworth, 1989a; Sarason, 1982). And we're beginning to develop structures to incorporate those understandings through the concept of professional development schools (Holmes Group, 1990). This study supports such restructuring.

The Challenges for Inservice Teacher Education

All of the teachers found that sticking to the popular and policy-imposed "rules" for using original literature in any form was inappropriate for many children. Although Anne did not need to find ways to reach non-readers, she found that some students in her classroom were bored. She found support in her school, through extensive opportunities for inservice education, to make appropriate modifications. The students in Anne's school did well with trade books and teacher-made materials. Therefore her school did not adopt the literature-based basals. Because of such support, Anne is the only contributor to this paper who still exclusively uses trade literature and

creates her own materials--instructional processes which she enjoys and for which she receives peer and professional recognition.

However, every teacher who had children with literacy difficulties received advice from veteran teachers to simply "give up "on them. "We can't reach them all," Mary was told by a colleague in her 20th year of teaching. "Sooner or later you'll see that and stop worrying so much." Hearing repeatedly that the six-, seven-, and eight-year-old Black and Hispanic children in her school were "simply not going to make it," Jennifer grew tired of these descriptions. Not able to garner enough peer and administrative support to critique the rules instead of the children, she decided to find a different level of support outside of the school. She's currently trying to get funding for field trips for these children who have little world experience needed to "make it" into literacy and school success.

The stories told here suggest that it may be beneficial to support beginning teachers internally as they are learning to teach literature. Given the range of children's needs, the power of school rules and practical classroom demands, a belief in the philosophy of a literature-based, whole-language classroom and a knowledge of instructional strategies is clearly not enough. The school-based support we noted--in the form of popular and policy-oriented guidelines from veteran teachers and administrators--was either too rigid to apply, competed with other rules for evaluation, or was too general to help teachers with students who could not read and write well. Since the reality is that most new teachers tend to be placed in classes with such students (another "rule" which might be worth reconsidering), they require support for classroom organization and management of new programs, materials preparation, and transferring the new program into specific schools and classrooms.

Our monthly conversational group and our research program became one means of providing that support. (See Teel & Minarik, 1990, and two companion pieces to this article, Hollingsworth, 1990b, and Dybdahl, 1990.) School-university partnerships and professional

development school efforts might look specifically at other forms that support might take. Without such support, this paper suggests that the difficulty in learning to teach a literature-based, whole-language program to give all children access to literacy may lie with the institutional rules in schools--and not with the new teachers.

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